United Nations A/71/328/Add.1

General Assembly

Distr.: General
3 October 2016
English
Original: Arabic

Seventy-first session
Agenda item 34
The situation in the Middle East

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Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

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II. Replies received from Member States

Syrian Arab Republic

[Original: Arabic]

Response regarding resolution 70/16

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes its support for General Assembly resolution 70/16 entitled "Jerusalem", and calls on the international community to bring pressure to bear on Israel to end its attempts to Judaize Jerusalem and revoke all of its baseless legislative and administrative measures aimed at changing the city's status and identity. It also calls for serious and effective steps to stop Israel's unlawful practices against the Palestinian people in Jerusalem, above all settlement activities and practices that undermine the city's holy sites. In order to achieve just and comprehensive peace, Israel must be made to withdraw from all occupied Arab territory to the line of 4 June 1967 and the Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, must be established.

The Syrian Arab Republic has consistently stated that the realization of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East requires the implementation of the United Nations resolutions aimed at ending the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and other Arab territories, the most important of which is Security Council resolution 497 (1981). It has also insisted that the relevant international resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), should be implemented fully and that the principle of land for peace, which was the basis of the Madrid peace process that was started in 1991, should be respected. It is regrettable that the international community chooses to ignore the conduct of Israel, which is a colonial entity founded on occupation and expansion that does not care for peace. Israel has committed acts of aggression against States of the region, repeatedly violated international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and responded to all peace initiatives with evasiveness and a plethora of excuses, in an attempt to consolidate its occupation.

The Syrian Arab Republic also reiterates its rejection of the Knesset decision dated 22 November 2010 mandating a referendum prior to any withdrawal by Israel from the occupied Syrian Golan or East Jerusalem, which was taken in violation and in contempt of international law, which prohibits the acquisition of territory by force, and in fresh defiance to the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes that, in order to ensure stability in the Middle East and preserve credibility of the United Nations, measures must be taken to implement, without bias or selectivity, all international resolutions aimed at ending the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and to apply the Geneva Conventions in order to bring pressure to bear on Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with the will of the international community, as expressed in numerous resolutions.

Response regarding resolution 70/17

Ever since Israel occupied the Syrian Golan in 1967, the international community has repeatedly rejected that occupation and demanded that Israel, the

occupying Power, should withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967. General Assembly resolution 70/17 of 24 November 2015, entitled "The Syrian Golan", demanded once more that Israel withdraw from all the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967 in implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions. General Assembly resolution 70/91 of 9 December 2016, entitled "The occupied Syrian Golan", called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with the relevant resolutions on the occupied Syrian Golan, in particular Security Council resolution 497 (1981), in which the Council, inter alia, decided that the Israeli decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void and without international legal effect and demanded that Israel, the occupying Power, rescind forthwith its decision.

The Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan has persisted for 49 years. During that time, United Nations resolutions have repeatedly called on Israel to end its occupation of the Syrian Golan, its unremitting repression of Syrian citizens suffering under colonial occupation and its blatant violation of international instruments and norms. Nevertheless, Israel continues to turn its back on United Nations resolutions and international law, and continues to occupy the Syrian Golan, in violation of international instruments and treaties and international law. In so doing, it has benefited from the protection offered by certain members of the Security Council.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns in the strongest possible terms the meeting held by the Government of Israel, the occupying Power, in the occupied Syrian Golan on 17 April 2016. In identical letters dated 17 April 2016 addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/354), the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic called on the United Nations and the Security Council to act immediately and condemn the holding of such an irresponsible meeting and to demand that that reckless action must not be repeated, particularly given that the meeting had been held in occupied Syrian territory. On 22 April 2016, the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement issued a communiqué condemning the convening of an Israeli cabinet meeting in the Occupied Syrian Golan, stating that decisions and declarations issued at that meeting were null and void and had no legal effect, and demanding that Israel comply with Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

Recently, Israel has added a new chapter to the annals of its racist and terrorist acts by providing direct logistical support to armed terrorist groups, which are using the area of separation as a haven now that United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) forces have withdrawn from their positions after some of their troops were abducted by those groups. Moreover, on more than one occasion, Israel has committed acts of direct military aggression on the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic in support of the terrorists, in flagrant violation of the separation of forces agreement and of international law. Israel has brought weapons and equipment into area of separation. Paragraph 28 of the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) issued on 14 March 2016 states that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) should cease to deploy unauthorized weapons and equipment in the area of limitation on the Alpha side and that

violations of the ceasefire line by IDF soldiers would lead to the potential escalation of tension between the two sides.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic denounces the settlement policies enacted in the occupied Syrian Golan by the Israeli Government, paying no heed to the relevant Security Council, General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions, the most recent of which was General Assembly resolution 70/91, which stresses the illegality of Israeli settlement construction and other activities in the occupied Syrian Golan and renews its call on Israel to desist from changing the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan and in particular to desist from the establishment of settlements. The General Assembly has called on Israel to desist from its continuous building of settlements.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also condemns all Israeli practices aimed at controlling the natural resources of the occupied Syrian Golan. Israel, the occupying Power, has systematically plundered those resources in brazen disregard for the principle of the permanent sovereignty of peoples under foreign occupation over their natural resources and in violation of Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and General Assembly resolution 70/225, adopted on 22 December 2015, entitled "Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources". Israel continues to divert natural resources in the occupied Syrian Golan and to prevent the Syrian population there from using their natural resources, including water resources. The Israeli occupation deliberately depletes those resources and restricts their use to Israeli settlers. Israel has also cleared land adjacent to the ceasefire line in the occupied Syrian Golan and cut down trees. The Israeli occupation authorities have also diverted water from Mas'adah Lake in the occupied Syrian Golan to settler farms. That Israeli action, which is contrary to international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, has created an economic and environmental catastrophe of enormous proportions for Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan that has resulted in significant material losses.

In a new flagrant breech of international law, and the four Geneva Conventions, and a renewed violation of internationally recognized resolutions, the Israeli occupation forces have confiscated thousands of dunums of land in the occupied Syrian Golan and unfairly allocated them to settlers that are being brought in for so-called "farming projects". The Israeli occupation forces have begun to divide up part of the confiscated land into 750 farms, the smallest of which will be 65 dunums. This year, 90 Israeli families have been brought in to settle those farms. Some 150 additional families will be brought in each year, until the total number reaches 750 families. The Israeli occupation authorities have also granted the settlement of Nimrod — which is built on land formerly containing the villages of Majdal Shams, Mas'adah, Jabatha al-Khashab and Ayn Qunyah — 40 new housing units and 10 dunums for tourism facilities. In addition, Israel has begun to conduct exploratory drilling for oil. The Israeli Afek company has started to drill for oil near the so-called Natur settlement. It has finished excavations at the first exploratory site, where it dug 10 wells to extract Syrian oil. The company announced that it had discovered a substantial 350-metre thick layer of oil in the southern Syrian Golan.

The Syrian Arab Republic condemns the funding by the European Union of a survey on "alternative tourism" to promote tourism in Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan. The funding was announced at conference held at the so-called Marom Golan settlement near the two destroyed Syrian villages of Bab al-Hawa and Muwaysah. Some 100 tourism experts and advisers took part in an exchange of ideas and views on how to promote tourism in the occupied Syrian Golan. These developments are a clear and flagrant violation of Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 70/91.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic once again calls on the Member States of the European Union and the United Nations refuse to import natural produce or manufactured products from the occupied territories, in order to comply with international law and emphasize the need for Israel to respect that law. Settlers in the occupied Syrian Golan are also exporting wine to the European Union that is labelled "Made in Israel", when it is actually being made in occupied territory.

Recently, Israel has provided yet another confirmation of its determination to violate all international instruments and international law, particularly international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and to persist with its provocative, brutal and arbitrary policies against our people in the occupied Syrian Golan. On 25 February 2015, occupation forces committed the criminal act of re-arresting the Syrian activist Sidqi al-Maqt, who had been released in August 2012 after being held in the bowels of the occupation's prisons for 27 years. Not long after, on 24 June 2015, they arrested Fida' Majid al-Sha'ir, Sheikh Jawlan Husayn Abu Zayd, Wi'am Abu Salih, Mi'dad Khatir and Jamal Rabah (all from the village of Majdal Shams), and also Salih Qays Mundhir and Sa'id Faris Da'bus (from the village of Ayn Qunyah), when they tried to block an Israeli ambulance transporting an injured member of an armed terrorist group that was operating in the area of separation with support from Israel.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic stresses once again that the Israeli occupation forces' policy of arbitrary detention and sham trials is part of a catalogue of Israeli crimes and human rights violations against the Syrian civilian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan stretching back five decades since the occupation of the Syrian Golan. It calls on international bodies to pressure Israel, the occupying Power, for the immediate and unconditional release of all Syrian detainees in its jails and detention facilities.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic calls on the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Security Council, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Human Rights Council, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and all human rights organizations to pressure Israel, the occupying Power, to guarantee the health conditions of Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan, particularly in the light of Israeli practices that destroy the environment. Israel has buried nuclear waste in the occupied Syrian Golan, specifically at the foot of Jabal al-Shaykh, in containers with a thirty-year life expectancy that are insecure and prone to cracking and leakage of radioactive contents into soil and groundwater. That exposes Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan to the risk of cancer, and cancer deaths have risen by 30 per cent. Furthermore, Israeli military camps and both military and civilian factories have buried their waste in the occupied Syrian Golan. Israel also uses internationally

banned fertilizers, which could adversely impact the lives and health of Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic also emphasizes that the above-mentioned international bodies must pressure Israel to cease taking peremptory decisions prohibiting citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan from visiting their Syrian homeland via the Qunaytirah crossing. Those arbitrary Israeli measures contravene the Geneva Conventions and other international norms and instruments. They serve only to increase the material, mental and physical suffering of Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan beyond all legal and moral bounds. The suffering of our people in the occupied Syrian Golan has also been exacerbated by the fact that the Qunaytirah crossing is controlled by the Nusrah Front and other armed terrorist organizations, with direct support from the Israeli occupation forces. One of the effects of that situation has been to prevent students in the occupied Syrian Golan from crossing into their Syrian homeland to pursue university studies.

The Syrian Arab Republic also reiterates its rejection of the Knesset decision dated 22 November 2010 mandating a referendum prior to any withdrawal by Israel from the occupied Syrian Golan or East Jerusalem. That decision was taken in violation and in contempt of international law, which prohibits the acquisition of territory by force, and in fresh defiance of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The Syrian Arab Republic has consistently stated that the realization of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East requires the implementation of the United Nations resolutions aimed at ending the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and other Arab territories, the most important of which is Security Council resolution 497 (1981). It has also insisted that the relevant international resolutions, in particular Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), should be implemented fully and that the principle of land for peace, which was the basis of the Madrid peace process that was started in 1991, should be respected. It is regrettable that the international community chooses to ignore the conduct of Israel, which is a colonial entity founded on occupation and expansion that does not care for peace. Israel has committed acts of aggression against States of the region, repeatedly violated international law and the Charter of the United Nations, and responded to all peace initiatives with evasiveness and a plethora of excuses, in an attempt to consolidate its occupation.

Lastly, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic emphasizes that, in order to ensure stability in the Middle East and preserve credibility of the United Nations, measures must be taken to implement, without bias or selectivity, all international resolutions aimed at ending the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and to apply the Geneva Conventions in order to bring pressure to bear on Israel, the occupying Power, to comply with the will of the international community, as expressed in numerous resolutions.